

Historic Bipartisan Step of 15% by 2020 Moves Nation Toward a Cleaner Energy Future

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - U.S. Representative Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) today celebrated passage of the bipartisan Udall-Platts-Rodriguez amendment creating an incremental federal standard for electric utilities to provide 15 percent of their electricity from wind, solar, other renewable energy sources and efficiency by 2020. The Renewable Electricity Standard amendment to H.R. 3221, led by Rodriguez, Tom Udall (D-NM) and Todd Russell Platts (R-PA), passed by a vote of 220-190.

"By adopting this amendment, the House of Representatives has taken a bold, bipartisan, and much needed step toward energy independence and a cleaner environmental future," said Rep. Ciro Rodriguez. "We have taken a historic step toward progress and not politics by investing in the vast renewable energy resources we have across our country - especially in Texas - moving our nation towards clean independent energy sources and away from the more volatile sources of energy we rely too heavily on today. By doing this we are contributing to the security of our nation, to the health of our children and grandchildren and the environment they are growing up in. Texas is already a national leader in renewable energy production, and given the renewable potential in the state, I expect that we will remain a leader for generations to come."

"Without the efforts of Ciro Rodriguez, the House of Representatives would not have approved the Renewable Electricity Standard by as wide a margin as it did today. Ciro brought his concerns to us in the spirit of forging a compromise, which helped broaden our support and spark the momentum that led us to its passage today," said Rep. Tom Udall (NM-03). "Ciro recognized that as the wind capital of the West, Texas could greatly benefit economically and environmentally from the inclusion of this amendment into the Energy bill. On behalf of our coalition, I would like to thank him for helping make history by passing the first ever Renewable Electricity Standard in the House, which will benefit Texans and our nation for generations to come."

"This amendment is an important step-similar to what is already taking place in many states, including my home state of Pennsylvania-to help ensure America reduces its dependency on foreign oil and meets its growing energy needs in an environmentally-friendly manner," Rep. Platts (PA-19) said. "The question is whether we continue to approach the energy issue as we have for the past 30 years, or if we are going to work towards a more diversified, reliable, and clean energy supply. I look forward to seeing this or a similar provision in any final conference agreement with the Senate."

A national Renewable Electricity Standard will:

- Slow global warming: By displacing the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity, an RES can cut emissions of conventional pollutants and greenhouse gases. A 15 percent RES would reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 500 million tons below business-as-usual levels, the equivalent to taking more than 50 million cars off the road;

- Reduce energy bills: Energy research firm Wood Mackenzie found that an RES would lower natural gas and electricity prices and save more than \$100 billion for American consumers;
- Create jobs: Wind and solar energy are likely to be among the largest sources of new manufacturing jobs worldwide during the 21st Century. A recent Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) study found that an RES would create hundreds of thousands of new American jobs;
- Revitalize rural America: Farmers and rural land owners in windy areas are reaping payments of \$3,000-\$8,000 per turbine per year, while still being able to work their land. The "wind harvest" can carry hard-pressed farmers through difficult times, such as droughts, even if crops fail; and
- Strengthen energy security: Domestic renewable energy can reduce projected imports of liquid natural gas (LNG) from such unstable regions as Qatar, Russia and Iran (which together hold more than half the world's gas reserves) and reduce U.S. energy payments to these nations.

If enacted into law, the RES will be 2.75 percent by 2010, gradually increasing thereafter to meet the 2020 goal. The state of Texas already has a renewable energy standard on the books that exceeds the initial year standard, and in San Antonio CPS has a diverse energy portfolio that puts it beyond even the current Texas requirement. Suppliers can meet requirements by purchasing credits from other entities who have obtained credits by producing renewable energy. It also allows utilities to bank credits for three years, and to borrow credits from up to three years in the future.

"Today's vote is the culmination of ten years of hard work. It's been a long but worthwhile journey," said Rep. Mark Udall (CO-02), who is cochair of the 218-member Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucus in the House of Representatives. "This is a great victory - the first time an RES has ever passed the House of Representatives - and it means that despite the strong opposition of utilities and vested interests who would have us stick with the status quo, the movement for positive change has grown stronger. The implementation of a national RES will benefit rural communities, save consumers money, reduce air pollution, and increase reliability and energy security. I commend my cousin Tom for his outstanding leadership and hard work on this important measure."

"The House today made it clear that inaction is no longer an option when it comes to clean and renewable energy," Energy and Commerce Vice Chair Diane DeGette (CO-01) said. "The federal government now follows the lead of 23 other states in enacting a national RES program. Over objections from industry, programs across the country have been wildly successful resulting in increased benefits to both consumers and the environment. A national RES program will arm us with a great resource as we accept the challenge of minimizing the impact of global warming."

"To really tackle the challenge of global warming, we need to wean ourselves off our addiction to fossil fuels," Rep. Frank Pallone (NJ-06) said. "Our amendment provides an efficient, market-based way of moving ourselves towards sustainable, clean energy and ending this addiction. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure it is part of the final energy package."

"The passage of this legislation is a major leap forward in our fight against global warming," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen (MD-08). "In a world threatened by climate change, increasing costs and decreasing supply, diversifying our energy mix with clean, homegrown renewables is good policy."

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